



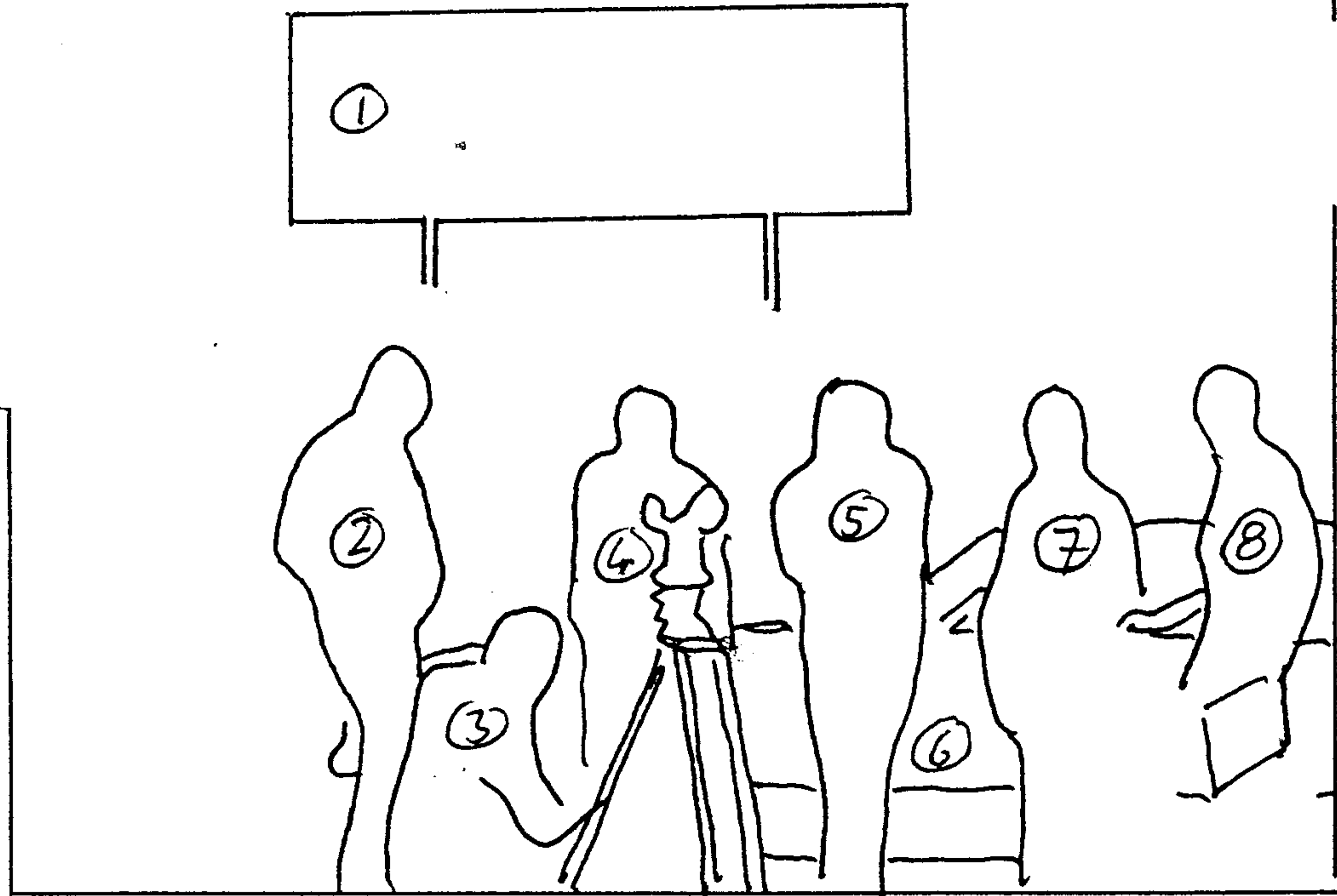
Film Screening of the BBC Production

REYNER BANHAM LOVES LOS ANGELES

*Thursday, May 14, 7:30 p.m.
Oakes 105, UCSC*

free, open to public

remove 5/15/87



- ① Billboard by Deborah Sussmann
- ② Mark Bonham-Carter (Assistant Cameraman)
- ③ "Speed" Murphy (Sound)
- ④ Ray Menman (Cameraman)
- ⑤ The Star himself
- ⑥ The Ford (courtesy Ford Motor Company)
- ⑦ Dorothy Stamford (Continuity)
- ⑧ A mysterious liaison person wished on us by the City of Los Angeles, but thought to be from the C.I.A.
Photo taken by Julian Cooper (director)

NOTES ON: REYNER BANHAM LOVES LOS ANGELES



The basic concept of the movie was put together in 1968-9 by myself and Julian Cooper, while working together on a segment of the BBC science/technology series Tomorrow's World. However there proved to be no proper "slot" for it in the formats then available at the Beeb for films about cities -- since Los Angeles was known by all right-thinking liberals to be a totally un-cultured "behavioral sink" as well as a total ecological disaster area, series handling programs on the arts would not touch the project, nor would those that dealt with city-planning and the environment. We hung fire for almost a year (while I got on with my book about LA) until two things finally happened: a new Head of Documentary Features was appointed and came up with the brilliant suggestion (and/or shameless cop-out) that the program should be fitted into the series "One Pair of Eyes", a kind of televisual isolation-ward where Flat-Earthers, sub-aqua black-smiths, Left-wing Monarchists and other licensed eccentrics could do their nuts on camera without contaminating the rest of the network.

The other thing that happened was that my book came out: this changed everything, because a) there was a book about Los Angeles so it must be a serious topic, and b) I was now the author of a book on a serious topic, and must therefore be a serious author. Handsomely funded by BBC standards (it was the beginning of the budget year) we set out for Los Angeles at the beginning of September 1971, armed with a complete script (almost un-known in the documentary field at that time, when even two-hour BBC features were shot from the hip). The film-crew joined us in California, and were one of the Beeb's regular road-crews on a six-month stint in the USA. They hated the script, which didn't contain enough poverty, suffering, rape, oppression, hard drugs, police brutality, etc., for their tastes (which had been totally depraved by two weeks spent filming a roller derby in Fremont for a feature on violence in sports).

In the end, we won them over, largely because the assistant cameraman, Mark Bonham Carter, loved the Watts Towers (he is now a director in his own right and his kid sister was the heroine of A Room with a View). So we did the script, near enough, and most of what was shot from the hip finished up on the cutting room floor. Unfortunately, one such sequence that got lost was an interview with Deborah Sussmann, the designer of the LA Olympics thirteen years later, who did all the locally produced graphics for the program, including those on the title-billboard. She even found us the billboard, on Little Santa Monica Boulevard, and demanded to know what to paint on it. Quick as a flash I said "Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles" and that is how the film got its title.

Incidentally, the "Baedekar" visitor guidance system really was a joke that

we made up while devising the script, following a suggestion by Jivan Tabibian of the Rand Corporation, but several viewers wrote to ask me for more details about it, which car rental companies were actually offering it, how it had solved some important technical problems over timing and distance, etc. As it turned out, these idiots were right to take it seriously -- about the time that the program was aired (in April 1972) Budget Rent-a-car began offering a taped guide to Los Angeles with their top-of-the-line models. But we were right in the end; Budget withdrew the service precisely because they couldn't solve the problems over timing and distance either. The singing bus-driver was a much better idea, and he was real, discovered by one of the crew!